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BOOK REVIEW | THE ASCENT OF MONEY

Q&A

Daughter's book recalls Bob Evans with fondness

By Jeffrey Sheban
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

For restaurant icon Bob Evans, "down on the farm" was more than a marketing slogan.

It's where he truly wanted to be. "Dad was known for sausage, but everybody who really knew him realized he was so much more than a sausage maker," said daughter Robbin Evans of Worthington, who collaborated with *Dispatch* Columnist Mike Harden on *A Bountiful Heart: The Life of Bob Evans*.

The new book provides a loving look at a man who turned a roadside restaurant in southern Ohio into a sausage-and-restaurant empire yet continued to live simply



FAMILY PHOTO

Robbin Evans and her father, circa 1995

EVANS

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in Gallipolis with his wife, Jewell, and their six children.

He died last year at 89.

Through his daughter's eyes, readers meet Wendy's founder R. David Thomas and Kentucky Fried Chicken mastermind Harland Sanders — both family friends.

She recalls being scared of the irascible Sanders when he visited the original Bob Evans restaurant and barked out orders to teach cooks how to prepare chicken.

Q: Where does the title of the book come from?

A: Everything revolved around his heart. It came from his generosity and his complete heartfelt trust in people.

Q: What kind of father was he?

A: He was a wonderful father. He worked a lot and was on the road a lot, but he burned up the highways and always got home at night.

► *A Bountiful Heart* is sold at bookstores and Bob Evans restaurants. For more information, visit www.aboutfulheart.com.



He was never happier than when everybody in the family was home for a holiday. He wanted everybody under the same roof.

Q: Why did you write the book?

A: The Bob Evans I came to know as a daughter had so many dimensions. My father never wanted to be anything more than a farmer and raise his children on a farm. I don't know where that came from, but land and conservation were extremely important to him.

He said, "People will always be able to find a sausage to eat or a restaurant to

visit, but, you know, if you lose your farm, that's another thing." He was more interested in helping small farmers keep their land, and he didn't get to do enough of that.

Q: Your father promoted year-round grazing techniques as a way to preserve small farms. How did he get interested in that?

A: He traveled to New Zealand with a group of Ohio State people and noticed the farmers were using rotational grazing methods. Because they didn't have to put up hay and fodder for the winter, they didn't need a lot of the huge machines that cost farmers so much. This wasn't something that he started, but he adapted it to Ohio.

Q: Your dad met Col. Sanders in the 1950s, and he also knew Dave Thomas when he was starting out.

A: They all were so much alike. They never gave up, and they had a penchant for working. Doing what they did made them happier than golfing or hanging out with

the boys. They had a passion for quality.

Q: In later years, your dad and Col. Sanders were sometimes critical of the food at the restaurants they created.

A: Col. Sanders would just throw a fit because he never thought the quality was where it should be. They dreaded the sight of him coming into their restaurants. Dad was a little bit like Col. Sanders.

Q: What can people learn from your dad's life?

A: His faith in people was his passion, and he believed in himself. He was too busy to worry about failing, so he just kept doing what he was doing harder, better and longer.

He'd spend hours at night making low-fat ice cream . . . for milkshakes that maybe shaved 2 cents off milkshakes. They were delicious; don't get me wrong. He was just trying to keep the costs down.

He loved the gratification of knowing he was a little different from the ordinary bear.

jsheban@dispatch.com